historian.” Perhaps the historian deserves occasionally to handle embellished resources! Perhaps too, there is a place for this work in the library of the avid book connoisseur which the above writers failed to mention.

The serious historian might wish for even more editorial aids such as more references to parallel accounts not found in this work. For example, Thomas Chapman’s account of a trip through the Upper South (pp. 23-42) was made just about the same time Moses Austin traveled over a part of this same route. A reference to the Austin account would have been useful. While editorial comments are common throughout both volumes and are perhaps all that could be expected in such an extensive anthology, there seems occasionally to be room for more exhaustive research and/or editorial comment. The illustrations are a little frustrating in this respect, indicating neither origin nor identity of what is illustrated, although admittedly the latter is sometimes obvious.

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Any reader willing to plow through 483 pages of additional Lincoln literature has the right to expect a fragment of something new and/or different. Thus, The American Conscience will be a big disappointment. The book’s topical outline is at least easily followed. The initial chapter surveys the debate issues in the context of pre-Civil War history, with specific emphasis upon the 1850s. Rarely is the probing deeper than the textbook level. The second part investigates the two main participants while the third division devotes a chapter to each of the seven debates.

The concluding essay is a moralistic survey of Lincoln’s racial views which sadly emerges as the nineteenth century’s “irrepressible conflict” in twentieth century garb. Despite the dust jacket’s claim to the contrary, Abraham Lincoln still appears as the “Christ-like figure,” and Stephen A. Douglas’ touted “rehabilitation” hardly goes beyond the work of George F. Milton. The author’s conclusions depend solely upon his unique interpretation of specific words in Lincoln’s writings,
and although he accuses others of speculation, he also dabbles too deeply into history’s “ifs.”

The faults involved in research and writing are staggering. The historian will be horrified with the repeated documentary omission for huge blocks of substantive fact. Equally surprising is an almost total reliance upon published documents and older secondary accounts. Neither the bibliography nor the footnotes indicate any utilization of manuscript collections or newspaper files while attempting to add some new facet to an already well known saga.

The bibliography contains a few recent works, but rarely do these appear in the footnotes. Most heavily used books were published before 1950. Surely the writings of Richard Heckman, Edwin Corwin, Carl Swisher, Philip Klein, and Frank Hodder would add valuable insight into the author’s understanding of the debate topics. Although Don Fehrenbacher’s *Prelude to Greatness* is included in the bibliography, Sigelschiffer’s chapters on the House Divided speech and the Freeport debate demonstrate neither usage nor understanding of this significant work. The Charleston debate discussion ignores Charles Coleman’s definitive study of that topic in his *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County*. The author claims to have traveled to the debate sites and acknowledges the help of some local historians, but the invaluable aid which could have been provided locally by Dr. Coleman or Dr. Glenn Seymour was apparently never tapped. For unexplained reasons valuable articles in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* were apparently never consulted.

In light of these major criticisms the book’s other faults, including occasional lapses into the first person and the use of archaic footnoting terms *supra* and *op. cit.*, pale by comparison. As a documentary volume, despite its far too extensive quoting, this book cannot replace Paul Angle’s more complete edition of the debates; and as an interpretive study the research is too shallow to add greater depth to an already extensive body of historical knowledge. While obviously there still are openings in the field of Lincoln lore, the present study will, unfortunately, not fill any gaping holes. It will be a disappointment to the professional historian as well as to the Lincoln buff.

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